

## CHAPTER XX

### LIFE POLICY. VIRTUE vs. SUCCESS

Life policy. — Oaths; truthfulness vs. success. — The clever hero. — Odysseus, Rother, Njal. — Clever heroes in German epics. — Lack of historic sense amongst Christians. — Success policy in the Italian Renaissance. — Divergence between convictions and conduct. — Classical learning a fad. — The humanists. — Individualism. — Perverted use of words. — Extravagance of passions and acts. — The sex relation and the position of women. — The cult of success. — Literature on the mores. — Moral anarchy.

712. Life policy. Some primitive or savage groups are very truthful, both in narrative and in regard to their promises or pledged word. Other groups are marked by complete neglect of truthfulness. Falsehood and deceit are regarded as devices by which to attain success in regard to interests. The North American Indians generally regarded deceit by which an enemy was outwitted as praiseworthy; in fact it was a part of the art of war. It is still so regarded in modern civilized warfare. It is, however, limited by rules of morality. There was question whether the deception by which Aguinaldo was captured was within the limit. In sport also, which is a sort of mimic warfare, deception and "jockeying"<sup>1</sup> are more or less recognized as legitimate. Samoan children are taught that it is "unsamoan" to tell the truth. It is stupid, because it sacrifices one's interest.<sup>1</sup> It does not appear that the experience of life teaches truthfulness on any of the lower stages. The truthful peoples are generally the isolated, unwarlike, and simple. Warfare and strength produce cunning and craft. It is only at the highest stage of civilization that deceit is regarded with contempt, and is thought not to pay. That honesty is the best policy is current doctrine,

but not established practice now. It is a part of a  
virtue policy,  
which is inculcated as right and necessary, but  
whether it is a  
success policy is not a closed question.

<sup>1</sup> *Globus*, LXXXIII, 374.